

I support media diversity

I wish to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In trying to promote competition, diversity and localism in our national media market, the FCC should retain the current media ownership rules. These rules serve the public interest, and relaxing them poses a major threat to the durability of our democracy.

The airwaves and spectrum by which many forms of media operate are, in truth, public property and a massively important natural resource. The health and future of our democracy depend upon proper management of these vital resources. Permitting 5 or 6 gigantic media conglomerates to wrest control of our media landscape is a death threat to democracy. Democracy requires dissent, requires different viewpoints, requires debate; 5 or 6 CEOs whose interests more or less align exactly cannot have a debate. It is in the public interest to have a media that reflects a diversity of viewpoints, and that can only occur if there is diversity of ownership. The FCC is charged with looking after the public interest, and it's high time that it does so.

Commissioner Powell, along with other proponents of easing the ownership rules, point to the emergence of the Internet as the great leveller, as proof that the old media matter much less these days, that bloggers hunched over computers in faraway places will ensure diversity. That's simply wishful thinking or outright deception. While there are trillions and trillions of websites, a quick look at the most popular and most visited websites turns up a list of sites owned almost exclusively by the same 5 or 6 giants of so-called "old media."

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited, due chiefly to massive consolidation of ownership across the market.

The right to informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,
Jeremy Suhr